



Water and Catchments
Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning
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DRAFT WIMMERA MALLEE WATER RESOURCE PLAN

VRFish, the recreational fishing peak body that represents 838,000 Victorian fishers places a very high value on the management of the state's water resources. The Wimmera Mallee region where a major water saving pipeline project has been constructed is one of the most important projects in regional Victoria.

Significant water savings from the Wimmera Mallee pipeline delivery system have currently secured the regions water supplies for stock and domestic customers, provided water for the environment, environmental flows and most importantly water allocations for eleven strategically located recreational water bodies. These eleven water bodies are heavily stocked with fish utilising Recreational Fishing Licence funds for the benefit of family fishing opportunities and general angling opportunities. Fishing in these water bodies over the last year has been proclaimed by many regional communities as some of the best witnessed for decades.

Lake Toolondo

Prior to the construction of the Wimmera Mallee pipeline Lake Toolondo was a very highly valued trout and redfin fishery that many described as the best in the state. Following the construction of the pipeline it was determined that Lake Toolondo would be managed as an off stream water storage with water diversion rules subject to water availability and water levels in Rocklands Reservoir.

It is well recognised that the current Victorian Government has a policy that Toolondo should be drought proofed to ensure this prized fishery remains viable.

VRFish strongly recommends the current review of the Wimmera Mallee Water Plan must consider the extreme importance of Lake Toolondo to recreational fishers and where possible implement a plan to recommission this lake as a viable water storage. It is well recognised Lake Toolondo has an excellent water holding ability and most importantly a very low water storage evaporation rate.

Recreation Water, Eleven Pipeline filled Regional Water Bodies

During the consultation phase of securing community support and funding for the construction of the Wimmera Mallee Pipeline it was clearly documented that community support was conditional on providing permanent water for eleven strategically located recreational water bodies.

At the time VRFish sent correspondence to the Water Minister noting our full support for the regional fishing and recognising the community's value placed on recreation and fishing

opportunities. VRFish received a very positive reply that noted the Pipeline Business Case demonstrated the importance of recreational water and the importance of maintaining this water supply for community benefit. Also noted in the Ministers reply was the business case supported a permanent annual allocation of up to 3.000ML of water savings from the project to be made available. Noted was this allocation will have a **high level of delivery security similar to farm water supply, unlike the current situation where water has not been supplied to many lakes in the region for the past six years due to drought.**

VRFish strongly notes this review should clearly identify the past oversights and reinstate the intended recreational water delivery to these 11 water bodies as a high priority, noting this delivery was conditional to community support of the construction of the valuable Wimmera Mallee Pipeline.

VRFish also suggests it should be recognised recreational water delivery to the noted eleven water bodies provides multiple social-economic benefits for the community and promotes many environmental outcomes.

Bulk Water Entitlement Determination Committees

VRFish as a key stakeholder of recreational water requests and as such we believe all future Bulk Water determination committee meetings must have a VRFish representative present to ensure an equitable representation and agreed way forward with this highly valued water allocation.

Environmental Flows: Wimmera and Glenelg Rivers

Currently, there is an excellent allocation of environmental water to be shared between these two valuable river eco-systems. VRFish suggests it would be more appropriate that each river was allocated a defined volume of environmental water (separate BE's) as these rivers have very different and specifically defined needs. For instance, one terminates in an estuarine system and the other terminates in the dry Mallee region.

VRFish also notes that "storage passing flows" were not supported at an environmental flows forum in the Glenelg region by the community due to damage to the river. A suggested way forward would be that the Glenelg Rivers, passing flows, compensation flows and environmental flows are in need of a review to ensure they meet defined environmental outcomes.

VRFish appreciates the opportunity to comment on this important draft document and we will continue to take special interest in the management of Victoria's water supplies and delivery arrangements.

Your sincerely,



Mr. Rob Loats
Chair

Victorian Recreational Fishing Peak Body
17 August 2017